

TELEGRAM

Foreign Service of the
United States of America

INCOMING

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA POL 15-7

Declassified

Authority: 43265 By:

Brewer Thompson Date:

05-06-2015

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Classification

Control: RECIFE 986

Recd: SEP 14, 1970

ACTION

POL

CHRON

RF-2

O R 141852Z SEP 70

FM AMCONSUL RECIFE

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3643

INFO RUESUA/AMEMBASSY RIO DE JANEIRO 4409

RUESUZ/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 372

RUESUP/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 175

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ACTION TAKEN

SUBJ: MARANHAO TORTURE REPORT

REF: RIO 6699

1. IN OPEN TRIAL, TWO PRIESTS FREED LAST WEEK. TRIAL HELD IN SAO LUIS WITH AUDITOR AND JUDGES SENT FROM FORTALEZA TO FUNCTION AS 10TH MILITARY REGION MILITARY COURT.

2. CASE APPARENTLY FELL APART AS TWO ACCUSING WITNESSES STATED THEY WERE INSTIGATED BY FEDERAL POLICE TO MAKE FALSE STATEMENTS CONCERNING ACTIONS OF PRIESTS. OTHER PROSECUTION WITNESSES ALSO APPARENTLY CONTRIBUTED TO COLLAPSE OF CASE WHEN THEY FAILED SUBSTANTIATE ANY CLAIM OSUSQJBVERSION. ONE PROSECUTION WITNESS ALLEGED TO HAVE SAID THAT PRIESTS PREACHED OJOTHERLY LOVE.

3. OUR INFORMATION SUGGESTS THAT FATHER MONTEIRO SHOWED MARKS ON LEGS AT TRIAL AND THAT HE PLASETZED A FULL ACCOUNT OF TORTURE AS PART OF HIS TESTIMONY. (TESTIMONY APPEARS AT COMPLETE ODDS STATEMENT BY GENERAL PIRES AS DESCRIBED REFTTEL AND CONTRADICTS STATEMENT IN FORTALEZA PRESS MADE BY REGIONAL FEDERAL POLICE DELEGADO.)

4. TRIALMUTCOME APPARENTLY RECEIVED JOYFULLY BY EXTENSIVE MISSIONARY COMMUNITY AS WELL AS BY RESIDENTS OF AREAS SERVED BY PRIESTS. DEFENSE ATTORNEY DESCRIBED AS HAVING MADE EBULLIENT STATEMENT PRAISING THIS EVIDENCE OF OPPORTUNITY FOR JUSTICE IN BRAZIL AND URGING MISSIONARIES FROM ABROAFTO CARRY THIS WORD TO THEIR COUNTRIES. WE INFORMED THAT MILITARY COURT PERSONNEL AND PROCEDURE UNUSUALLY SENSITIVE TO DEFENDANTS, HELPFUL AND OBJECTIVE.

5. CONSISTENT WITH USUAL PRACTICE, FURTHER TREATMENT THIS CASE MAY OCCUR IN FORTALEZA.

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. MOST OF INFO IN PARAS 1 TO 4 OBTAINED FROM LETTER OF EYEWITNESS AT TRIAL, SISTER BARBARA (FNU), AMERICAN NUN, TO COLLEAGUE SISTER THERESE DRUMMOND WORKING IN RECIFE. TAPES ALSO TAKEN AT TRIAL TO WHICH SISTER BARBARA HAD ACCESS.

7. COMMENT: FEDERAL POLICE IN MARANHAO APPEARED TO HAVE PLAYED CLASSIC ROLE OF FOOTSIE WITH LOCAL LANDED INTERESTS IN INTERIOR STATE, DEMONSTRATING LITTLE PERCEPTION IMPLICATIONS FOR CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS, NATIONAL IMAGE, ETC. MOREOVER, EITHER PERSONAL DELEGADO AND GENERAL PIRES HONESTLY BELIEVED PRIESTS WERE GUILTY AND HAD NOT BEEN TORTURED, OR WERE ACTING TO SUPPORT OR COVER UP THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR CONFRERES. EUPHORIC RESPONSE OF MISSIONARY COMMUNITY TO FREEING PRIESTS AND THE FACT OF THEIR RELEASE COULD HAVE FAVORABLE IMPACT CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS AND OFFSET APPARENT PREVIOUS POOR HANDLING BY FEDERAL POLICE. IT ALSO POSSIBLE THAT OUTCOME WILL BE CITED BY SOME CHURCHMEN AS PROOF TORTURE AND REPRESSIVE HANDLING OF CLERICS. BUT ON WHOLE, OUTCOME PROBABLY CONSTRUCTIVE IN TERMS CHURCH-STATE RELATIONSHIP AND BRAZIL IMAGE. IT ALSO PRESENTS GOB WITH UNUSUAL OPPORTUNITY PRESENT OFFSET TO WIDESPREAD CRITICISM ABROAD. IN PART, WHAT HAPPENS TO FEDERAL POLICE INVOLVED WILL DETERMINE HOW EFFECTIVELY GOB EXPLOITS THIS CASE IN OWN INTEREST.

8. AIRPOUCHING COPY OF LETTER FROM SISTER BARBARA TO SISTER THERESE.

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